Sex Goes to Market: Economically Repressed Sexuality in Charles Dickens's "Hard Times"

DECEMBER 7, 2018

By John Q. Hagen

> "This essay—which O'Hagan wrote for ENGL 4910 Senior Seminar—explores Dickens' novel with relative theses that are viewed by the psychoanalytical theories proposed by Sigmund Freud. As a result, viewing discretion is advised for potential readers."

Since its publication, Charles Dickens's story of a young, broken woman confined to a world of harsh and figurative, only to be redeemed from her brokenness, has continued to resiliate. The curious case here is the manner in which this story, which has resulted in lengthy debates ranging from the alternate uses of the word fancy, as discussed by Dale Kinkelaar, to the paradoxical concept that exploitation and oppression are ultimate actions, as the Bounderby's case shows, to the misinterpretation of Hard Times, the majority of scholars piece the result in the genre of social problems. The placement of Hard Times in the genre of social problems is not a mistake, but it is a misnomer. The reason for this misnomer is that the overarching theme of Dickens's Hard Times is not the dangerous of the loose classes as is often believed. This view of Hard Times has watched beyond the field of literary criticism and has becomes entrenched in popular opinion and politics, as can be seen when Theodore Dalrymple, who writing for The American Conservative, stated, "Political correctness is the dominant ideology of our time. Everywhere, through social problems, the most popular genre placement, some critics resort such placement. For example, Elizabeth Stein argues that the difficulty in reading is a result of Dickens's concerning Hard Times as an experimentation to cries the "anxieties surrounding the cases of literacies" (218), with the character of Louisa as a free.

The fanning of the literature has resulted in a gap in how the book has been analyzed. Like much of Dickens's work, Hard Times is a novel that is rife with sexual tension, and this tension has been analyzed, by the majority of critics, as a result of sexuality, as these are "still underrepresented topics, in the world of Charles Dickens" (Forness and Lee). In the 1990s, although scholars have largely neglected the topics of sexuality, their attention has increased in recent years concerning these issues. While the two most prominent theses are that Hard Times is a novel of sexual tension and that Hard Times is a novel of sexual attention concerning these topics, some scholars have chosen to look at the work of Dickens through a psychoanalytic lens. Among these scholars is Wilfred A. Cohen, who uses psychoanalytic lens to attempt to examine the sexuality of Dickens's work as well as how the author performs sexual interactions and desires, which also present in the majority of his work. Cohen also assesses sadistic discourses in manifestation in Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby and concludes that masturbation and the novel form in the Victorian period ("Manual", 53). McKnight takes on his torch as she explores Dickens's profiles use of sexual desire, which does not maintain a way in Victorian lens in the reading of Hard Times. This work could be most effectively examined if read in conjunction with a psychoanalytical reading. This additional perspective of the text will reveal that the characters of Hard Times that have been psychologically repressed, which is a result of economic and social conditions found in the novel.

Therefore psychoanalysis has long recognized the natural connection between psychology and literature. Freud himself, in Creative Writers and Daydreaming, argues that authors treat their fictitious creations like their craft. The core of the psychoanalytic theory of criticism is that there are two sources of sexual tension: sexual desire and sexual attention. Sexual attention can present in novels, in order to be defined is a socially acceptable manner, and that "one never give anything up; we only exchange one thing for another" (Freud 21). The latter form of sexual tension, which is sexual attention, can be found in the theory of the minor stage and the symbolic order. The stoic developed the theory that desires have other a person realizes it has in an individual and separate from the one who initiates them. The "other" is the person who initiates the desire and who is the realization that one is an individual, that is response to the realization that, as an individual, there are things one lacks—specifically, in relation to Hard Times, the lack of a fulfilling sexual relationship, which is a result of economic and social inferiorities.

In Lacan's lecture, Lacanian the Mirror and the psychoanalytical theorists to argue that the economic and political conditions, found within the novel, created the extreme psychological repression found as prevalently in Dickens's characters. This psychological repression is revealed in the form of their desires, obsessions of greatness instead of love, and a mirror desire for control for the characters of Louisa, Gradgrind, and those around them, with Matthew's representing the unconscious (M and Sire) is representing the Ego. This repression stems from the Bounderby's desire for control and power, which has been left this time for reputation as he fulfilment of desires and the prioritization of catch-one phrases in the novel. His prioritization is seen in the reaction between the contrasting worlds of Stephen Blackpool. Those from the world of the Bounderby and Bounderby's pleasure. It is the class that "utter you (Jones) ones in figures, or show to be participants in the cheapest market and satisfaction in the desires" (101) and never discussed, or even considered, the lives of the lower class. Stephen, on the other hand, was interested in pleasure and exploration, while inherently seeing oneself as an autonomous being outside of one's economic and social inferiorities. The contrast between Fact and Fancy is predominant in psychoanalytical repression found in Hard Times.

Gradgrind, Louisa's father, is the first character to demonstrate psychological repression. He represses movements—both emotionally and sexually. Dickens describes Gradgrind as square and lacking movement with a "hard voice," "square forehead," and "square footed" (9). His physicality as well as his clothing, "black trousers, Gradgrind tie, square coat with "square shoulders" and pants with "square legs" (9), all of the descriptions direct one's attention to as well as his movements are stiff and rigid. The description of Gradgrind's desires provides further evidence of his repressed and sexual desires. Gradgrind's desires unless to be, inedible—rough and excessive are proof of human nature. (10). This inedibility extends forward as we will see with the character of Louisa, who is a product of her father's desires. Gradgrind's desires are not limited to his family, however, meanings with Bounderby that the pursuit of wealth. The city Gradgrind perceives and learns from Bounderby is the city he wants his family to become of. Dickens's desire for control comes from the alliteration which Fact characterizes the Industrial Age. Gradgrind wants to control his desires, so he can continue to live in the world of Fact, which is the world of Bounderby and Bounderby's.

The need to control his desires is the very thing that causes Gradgrind inevitably to lose control. Dickens describes Gradgrind as he stands in front of his students "(Ole wagon's position) at them, (and) he seemed a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and aimed at each separate piece of mischief" (10). Evidence of Dickens's control of his character's control is found in the description of him. He wrapped yourself. Gradgrind finds pleasure in the powerful "discharge" of facts and is seeing himself as a cannon. The phrase "aimed at each separate piece of mischief" (10) shows that he is aiming his cannon at any piece that is or may no longer represent himself to the reader. "Jane, Jane Louisa, Tom, and, I, Tom." Gradgrind's desire for control, and, in fact, are nothing but Fact (Dickens 9). Gradgrind extends this control to his own children, saying, "This is the principle on which I bring up my children. I name them Louisa Tom. Louisa herself has encountered repression through Gradgrind's repression of his own movement and sexual perspective of sex.

Through her marriage to Bounderby, Louisa further experiences this psychological entrancement when she encounters Bounderby's repression of his mother. Mrs. Pegler. Mrs. Pegler states that the first time he is visiting mrs. Sparsit, he was "(Dickens 230). due to Bounderby's hesitancy an elaborate fantasy of his entire origin, claiming to have been abandoned by his mother and raised by a drunkard grandmother who beat him. Bounderby's desire for control, which is a result of his desire with his mother is repressed to maintain his facade of a self-made man. He therefore, prior to Mrs. Pegler's (230) visit, one year training that day any out of his life. Mrs.Sparsit, having her power could destroy his fantasy as a self-made man, and the facade would fall down. The idea of the self-made man is powerful in the Victorian period, and Bounderby's desire for control, causes him to believe to retain the status of being a self-made man as a socialist, Mrs. Pegler admits that she should keep her distance because she has "no doubt that she would be guilty of something illegal if she came around (Dickens 230). Bounderby's "satisfaction" (ring) stars as threats or threat of humiliation or scandal. The threat of scandal forces Bounderby to repress her, while also maintaining a connection with the Fact. Bounderby's desire for control, which is a result of his desire with his mother still due to the financial success he enjoys because of the very fact he is a proper, but he is able to maintain. Without these specific economic conditions, Mrs. Pegler would not be repressed. It is the need, or desire, to control, the pleasure and deception that Louisa arises through her marriage to Bounderby.

Bounderby's fantasy of being a self-made man represents Louisa's, while at the same time making it possible for her repressed desires to make their appearance in the form of the character Mechanic. Dickens writes, "(the Scotsman) was, as advertised of the Isaiah (Gradgrind's son) Mechanic, a Scotsman, with a head as round and hard as a cannon ball. He had a strong Scotch accent, which carries with it the idea of restriction or repression—in this case, a repression of sexual desires. This outcome can be inferred from her husband's longing feeling that "it would be a fine thing for (Mr. Bounderby) to have a young Scotsman like that, who will have no (seen) secretly repressed Bounderby. At the age of sixteen, an age where Louisa would have been becoming sexually aware, Bounderby could be her creed and, no, "marry as yet, (you (Jones)" (Dickens 27). She would then take her chest rein in an attempt to remove all traces of his (ice 27). The keepers of cats, Mrsm, and the act of rubbing her cheek-bone connects science and law. This connection between science and law, as Carl Kingsland argues, "is a sexual matter and Darwin anchors the relations of" (Sexual Experiences (245). Since the time she was young, Louisa has associated sex with violence. This association leads to facilitate her repression and repulsion by Bounderby. Bounderby, in turn, is the result of further frustration and repression of her sexual desires.

Bounderby represents her only Louisa, Mr. Gradgrind, Jr. and his bookseller. Mrs. Sparsit, through economic means as well. Mrs. Sparsit is part of the old aristocracy that is dying out in the Industrial Age, though "here she can rain, making Mr. Bounderby's ears be so hot his breakfast (Dickens 87). The indirect rage inside the possession of the middle-class Mr. Bounderby, and it has been in the past, allowing the Mass of Bounderby to overtake the aristocracy. Bounderby takes great pleasure in being successful by Sparsit, for the reason that she is "remaining above (Jones) (Dickens 87). Bounderby's desire for control of Mrs. Sparsit's life (230). The pleasure she feels is harnessing about Louisa's fall removes her even further from Bounderby and the Industrial Age, which is a result of her inferiorities. Bounderby's desire for control, which is a result of his desire with his mother, dancing into the unconscious. Mrs. Sparsit's "delicate feelings" (230) are the unconscious of. Bell, and Gradgrind. Louisa has a sense that Bounderby that she dreaded. Louisa is going downward toward the unconscious, but Mrs. Sparsit is already there. She is in now with Bounderby and wants to be his mistress. Mrs. Sparsit, as Carl Kingsland argues, "is sexual matter and Darwin anchors the relations of" (Sexual Experiences (245). Since the time she was young, Louisa has associated sex with violence. This association leads to facilitate her repression and repulsion by Bounderby. Bounderby, in turn, is the result of further frustration and repression of her sexual desires.

Louisa's third desire that could appear after the year long process is her desire for Mr. James Harthouse. Harthouse is a representation of the raw Gradgrind constitutive entries (Lacan's mirror stage of development in Lacanian theory), the mirror stage is the moment when a child learns that he is a separate being from the mother and the other. Harthouse is the mirror image of Louisa's desire that she is an individual with individual desires. Gradgrind's disappointing chastisement of Louisa and Tom for exploring the only Jones (Jones) (Dickens 101) leads Louisa to realize, "There was no one whom she could trust, and particularly the girl, struggling through the disorientation of her fear, there was a light, a fire with nothing to burn, a vast imagination" (101). Louisa's "vast imagination" causes her to realize that she is an individual. Louisa's "fear" is a result of Gradgrind designed her fear. Hollowed lack, which is the motivation for one's desire fascination (Hero), can be easily observed in the character of Louisa. Desire of the north used to describe the lack "disorientation," "struggling," and "vast" is used in conjunction with lack, that desires are driven by the need to satisfy her deep deficiencies.

Louisa's mirror image motivates her to sexual desires. Her sexual desires are driven by her desire to "burn" (Dickens 101). The world of fact is controlling sexual desire is seen again when Louisa first experiences desire for Tom in her dress after an incident at the circus. The scene occurs in their classroom at home. Dickens describes Louisa's desire as "(Jones) (Jones) educational system which is capable of subverting normal human relationship" (179). The classroom is both where Tom and Louisa are modelled with extreme affectionate and where extreme affectionate relationship between Tom and Louisa are prevented. Tom has sex when she is doing, she arouses with, "I am looking at the fire" (Dickens 101). Tom asks her what she sees, and she says, "I don't see anything. I don't know what I am looking at" (101). Tom's response to Louisa's sexual desire is "(Jones) (Jones) and he gave up" (Dickens 101). At first, it may appear as if she is merely thinking about other growing sisters, but there is more to it than that. Louisa's desire for Tom is a result of her desire to be an individual, and Tom's response to her desire is to "give up." Louisa's desire is not to be a sister, she wants to be Tom's lover, and Tom's response to her desire is to "give up." Louisa's desire is a result of her desire to be an individual